DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 555 PS 028 596

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TITLE	Getting Dads Involved in Schools: Recruiting Fathers To Be Partners with Schools for Kids, for Dads, for Mums, for Schools, for the Whole Community.
INSTITUTION	Newcastle Univ., Callaghan (Australia). Family Action Centre.
ISBN	ISBN-0-64634-724-1
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	39p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Men and Boys Project, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308, Australia; Tel: 02-4921-8739; Fax: 02-4921-8686; e-mail: fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au; Web site: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/department/fac/boys (Publication No. 978, $5.50, GST included and included. Free shipping within Australia. Add 10% to order for shipping outside Australia. Make cheques payable to: The Men & Boys Project).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Change Strategies; Father Attitudes; *Fathers; Foreign Countries; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Student Relationship; *Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS	Australia

ABSTRACT

Acknowledging that if schools want fathers to become involved in their children's education, schools must value men for what they can contribute, this booklet presents stories giving a range of examples of schools trying to facilitate the involvement of fathers, including uncles, grandfathers, and other men from the community. The stories are not intended as recipes that will apply to every school or area but as starting points and guidelines for other schools and communities to make fathers an important part of the school culture. The booklet's first section is "Appreciating Dads: More Than a Father's Day Card." The second section, "Getting Dads In: Not a Recipe, But Some Useful Ideas," contains these stories: (1) "Let's Have a Story, Dad! Dads Reading to Young Students"; (2) "Guess Who's Coming to Breakfast? McDonalds in a Mining Town--A Place to Start"; (3) "Fathers and Friends Breakfast: Hearing, Seeing and Eating"; (4) "The Boy's Talk Program: Goulburn High School Invites Dads To Talk"; (5) "Barry's Story: What Do Men Think about When They Listen?"; (6) "Looking to Fathers: Preventing Rape--A Job for Dads"; (7) "Three Ways To Use a Dad: For Everybody's Benefit"; and (8) "Let's See What Happens: Four Men and a Stick Head West." The third section, "Being Like a Dad: A Proper, Unpaid Activity for a Man," contains: (1) "Wow, This Really Works! Having a Son Fathered"; (2) "One Hour a Week Can Help: From a Shy Little Boy to a Confident Lad"; (3) "An Awful Lot of Satisfaction: Literacy in Broken Hill"; (4) "Achieving Success: A Seaman Gets Involved"; and (5) "Becoming an Advocate and a Guardian: Male, Single, and Patient." The final section, "And What about the Future? Suggestions for a Preferred Future," contains the text of a letter from Australia's Minister for Family Matters. (EV)

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The FatherCare Initiative

Family Action Centre

The University of Newcastle

Deborah Kay Hartman

Getting DADS Involved in Schools

Recruiting fathers to be partners with schools

For Kids
For Dads
For Mums
For Schools
For the whole Community

Richard Fletcher

The FatherCare Initiative
Family Action Centre

The UNIVERSITY *of* NEWCASTLE

Getting DADS Involved in Schools

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1997

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Acknowledgements

Cover photograph by Jim Rolan
permission of Burnside

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The printing of this booklet was made possible by a generous donation from FATHERING THE FUTURE

ISBN 0646347241

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From the Minister for Family Matters 31
6th September 2001
Richard Fletcher

Foreword

The Family Action Centre is pleased to be the umbrella organisation for the Men and Boys Project and for undertakings such as the FatherCare Initiative.

In a decade of work with families the need to develop a broader approach to men's involvement across the community has been clear to us. This booklet provides an important first step in broadening our idea of what fathers can do and in improving the atmosphere in community organisations and institutions such as schools to engage more effectively with fathers.

Di James

Director Family Action Centre
The University of Newcastle

Appreciating Dads

There is a repetitive conversation in schools about the issue of inviting fathers to take part in school activities. In essence, it goes like this:

"Do you invite fathers into this school"?

"Yes, of course we do".

"How do you invite them in"?

"We send a letter home saying, Dear Parents".

"Do any fathers come?"

"No."

Now the difficulty here is that everybody knows that when a letter arrives home headed "Dear Parents", that really means "Dear Mum". So the school's invitation to parents, while formally correct in inviting both mothers and fathers, is understood to mean that the mother should respond.

The status quo in schools is for women to volunteer. If we want men to get involved, we will have to do things differently. This means going after men, but it also means valuing men, fathers, for what they might contribute. It may seem an obvious point but if we want fathers involved then it would be a good idea to let fathers know that they are appreciated and valued. Not that schools have said bad things about fathers, but because the normal school routine does not rely on fathers to interact with the students, fathers are easily left out of the picture.

Being positive about fathers is part of many schools' approach to their community. Schools promote the image of fathers by encouraging their pupils to express their feelings for their fathers through competitions, drawing suggestions and story writing tasks such as *What I Like About My Dad*. Here are some examples of the style:

> *I love my Dad because he gets me things that I want like a bike. I love my Dad because he never yells at me for doing things wrong. I like playing games with my Dad. By Stephanie Taylor*
>
> *I love my Dad because he works very hard for my family. I like to help my Dad around the farm by helping kill all of the rabbits. I like to go walking with my Dad and I like it when he gives me rides on our horses. by Waylon Zammit*
>
> *My dad plays football with my brother and me. By Mitchell Dwyer. My dad tickles me when we go to bed. My dad loves me. By Chloe Carbines.*
>
> *My dad means a lot to me because he's a really good scone and pancake cooker. My dad cares a lot about me, and when I get in trouble dad always forgives me. When my dad gets home from work he is always grubby and smells like grease. My dad works very hard on our family car and also works very hard by building dams with the bulldozer. My dad is really kind to me, and also Dad is very fit. He lifts weights two or three times a week. On Thursdays when my dad gets home from work and at 9.30 when the footy show is on he always falls asleep in the rocking chair. Mum has to tape it for him. A while ago my dad took me to movie World in Queensland and took me on the Batman Ride. It was scary. My dad taught me how to ride the motor bike. That's how much my dad means to me! If you ever get to read this I love you very much. Love Amy.*

These examples, though typical of the sorts of writing done by primary age pupils are unusual in being part of a wider, public appreciation of fathers. The McIvor Times and the McIvor Health and Community Services in rural Victoria asked all the schools in their district to encourage students to write letters about their fathers. A selection of letters were printed in the McIvor Times in the lead up to Father's Day under the headline "Dear Dad ... P.S. I love you". Over ninety letters were printed in the first week of the project.

As can be seen from these examples, students are quite capable of finding things to like about their fathers. The danger in relying on this approach exclusively, however, is that the picture of fathering is too simple. Of course schools will seek to emphasise the positive aspects of fathering, especially as seen through the eyes of pupils. A private tutoring centre in Newcastle produced a Father's Day Herald which included this laudatory, but nutritionally alarming, description of Dad:

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He takes us to McDonalds.

He gets us chicken kebabs every Monday.

He gets us Kinder Surprises when we help with the shopping.

He gets us K.F.C. every Tuesday.

In another competition, "What's Special About My Dad", sponsored through a hardware company, an eight year old boy submitted a graphic drawing of a punch with the caption "My Dad always gets into fights". The organisers decided, after some discussion, to include the poster as part of a shopping centre display, but placed it at the bottom corner of the display.

Appreciating fathers is not the same as saying "Dads are Great!" or organising a card for Father's Day once a year. Appreciating fathers must start from a positive view of the fathers in the community, but it entails actively encouraging fathers to be involved with their own children's schooling and with other students at the school. One hesitation many schools have in pursuing a father-friendly policy is the possible negative effect on children without fathers. While caution in not assuming a two-parent household is appropriate, other male guardians, grandparents, uncles, etc. can be invited too. Broadening the notion of fathers to include other responisble men provides a way to engage dads without disadvantaging single parent (usually a mother) families. It should also be recognised that fathers need not be restricted to interaction with their own children. Indeed, as many of the examples in this book demonstrate, it is the other children in the school who are most likely to benefit from fathers taking part in school activities.

There is no one correct way to engage fathers. One example of inviting fathers to interact with pupils, while maintaining a positive context, occurred in a small semi-rural primary school where the casual teacher had already completed a Mother's Day celebration inviting mothers in. The teacher asked the class if they would be interested in having fathers come in for a celebration of Father's Day. "Absolutely" replied the class.

The invitation card featured a gorilla, an image chosen by the children as likely to appeal to their dads. "5/6 R Are Having A Fun Night to Celebrate Father's Day" it said. It was sent out to the fathers and male guardians. To the surprise of the teacher, 19 dads turned up. After the introductions the first game was played - team hockey. Each father was teamed up with his own child. This went surprisingly well.

Next came the presentations. Students read poems that they had written to their dads, appreciative, sometimes ambiguous, funny poems. Here is one:

My Dad

My dad is away on business a lot, and I don't get to see him very much. He works very hard. My dad gets to ride in planes nearly every week! That lucky! My dad sometimes says he would rather have two boys, but I know he doesn't mean it. Sometimes we tease him. He gets angry but he's really laughing inside. We try not to get him cross, but, let's face it, we kids have to have SOME fun! When he's sick we nurse him back to health - only for career practice though. My dad's the one in our family who gives in to our pleadings. To conclude this statement, if I wanted a slave, I would have my dad!

Katie

In the Guess Who game, each dad had a cardboard hat with the name of a celebrity written on it. The dads couldn't see their name and had to ask questions to discover who they were. During the preparation for this game, one boy told the class how his dad really thought that he (the dad) looked like Sylvester Stallone of Rambo fame. So, on the night, they gave his dad the Sylvester Stallone hat. When the dads' questions led him to guess the answer, he burst into laughter, joined by the whole class.

Another hit was Katie's mother. Because her husband was away working, and wanting her daughter to be able to present her poem, Katie's mum dressed up in a suit and tie and came as Katie's father. Between the games and presentation the students served their dads supper as a sign of appreciation. At the end of the night the dads wanted to stay to play 'just one more' hockey match.

What is remarkable about this approach to dads is the absence of the work ethic. Instead of asking dads in to the school to help build a fence, or be on a committee or even work in the canteen, this invitation was to a celebration. The men even played with the children! Feedback to the teacher from the mothers after the event included improved relations between the children and their fathers (or stepfathers) and a new interest in the children's school work by the men.

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Another aspect of appreciating fathers is to discover how important fathers can be to children's lives. One school had initiated an adventure program particularly for at-risk boys. Parents were invited to the presentations of their certificates in front of the whole school assembly, and several came, although not many fathers. One of the boys waiting to receive his certificate noticed his father's car passing the school. Knowing that his father was on shift work the boy assumed he was parking the car in order to come and watch the presentations. When the father didn't appear the boy realised that his father was just accidentally passing the school. The effect on him was dramatic. Seeing this disappointment played out, and talking to the boy about it later, the school counsellor then made a vow to pursue fathers to be involved in school activities.

For the next course she redoubled her efforts to get fathers to come to the introductory interview where the parents were able to discuss their goals for their sons. However the first mother she contacted said that the father wasn't available to come to the meeting at the school. "Well, we will have it a bit later" offered the school counsellor. "No that wouldn't do" said the mother, "he won't be home until 5 o'clock". "Well, we'll have it a 5 o'clock" replied the school counsellor, there was a silence on the other end of the phone and then, "Oh, alright, we'll both come".

In another region, the school counsellor noticed that when parents were requested to come in for discipline interviews, most of which involved boys, it was usually the mother who would appear. When she requested a male parent to come for the discipline interviews it first was necessary to make sure that the school had the records available to contact the male parent (where the couple were separated) and it was also necessary to hold the meeting after hours in some cases. The effect of having males attend the interviews, the counsellor noticed, was to improve the outcome of the discipline interview markedly. It was not always appropriate to invite males - in some cases violence was an issue within the family - but overturning the assumption that fathers are too busy or too dangerous to involve in discipline interviews was an important step in improving the school environment. After hours meetings are useful, but not necessarily essential. At the Wagga and Newcastle programs, described later in this publication, men did manage to call in and spend some time in the schools. Shift workers and self employed men are a significant proportion of our workforce; it should not be assumed that school hours are the central factor in men not attending.

The sorts of changes made by these counsellors, pursuing fathers to be involved in assessing the goals for the course, or in discipline issues, is also a way of valuing fathers. A third way of valuing fathers is through their role with boys.

There is a general understanding in the community that boys look up to older boys and men, and learn from them. Fathers in the community can be appealed to (valued) through their concern for their own sons and for boys in the community. This is not an appeal to a narrow chauvinistic sentiment but an appeal which is based on the idea that fathers care about what happens to their sons. Of course fathers also care what happens to their daughters, but fathers feel a particular responsibility to the next generation of men. This approach links desirable outcomes for boys with the involvement of fathers. The poor outcomes for boys in Australia are well documented. Boys do very poorly compared to girls in a number of areas from head injury and accidents to literacy skills and social behaviours. It response to these figures public meetings have been held in many areas of Australia to discuss the issue of boys well being. These meetings have been held at schools or in a near by appropriate venue such as an RSL Club or a town hall or even a factory site where men are used to attending. Fathers have attended, sometimes their first ever school event, to discuss what is happening with their sons. In the last twelve months these meetings have taken place in every state in Australia.

Even in locations with small populations, over 100 parents have frequently been attending. The mothers and fathers have bought their own concerns about how well their sons are doing and had a chance to hear information about what is concerning others around Australia about boys.

One outcome of these meetings is a shared determination between the parents and the school to improve boys' educational and social outcomes. Another outcome of these meetings is that a change in the way fathers see being involved in the school. Getting "in there" becomes regarded as a more masculine activity, an important part of fathering rather than something that women usually do.

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Getting Dads In

Getting dads in the door is an essential first step. However for fathers to be involved requires more than just getting them in the door. The stories from the schools which follow give a range of examples of schools trying to facilitate the involvement of fathers, including uncles, grandfathers and other men from the community, in schools. None of these stories is a recipe which will apply to every school or every area. They do, however, provide some useful starting points and guidelines for other schools and other communities to make fathers an important part of the school culture.

Let's Have a Story, Dad!

By Ineke Kolder-Wicks

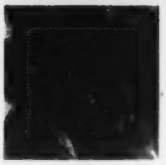
Situated in the heart of a rural city, South Wagga Public School draws its 310 students from the centre of town and newer suburbs. The eleven classes are organised into Stages. There are 2 kindergartens and 3 classes each for Stages 1, 2 and 3. The support which the school receives from its community is a major factor in the success of many initiatives, including *Let's have a story, Dad!* In 1995, as a result of staff and P&C interest in the NSW Government report on boys' education, we formed a committee imaginatively called the Gender Equity Committee. The GEC, as it was known, comprised staff, parents and a community member who asked to join. Its aim was to identify sources of gender imbalance in social and educational activities and to suggest ideas to address these within the school.

A revealing piece of evidence available to the GEC was the Basic Skills Tests results. Although students generally performed well, the difference between boys' and girls' results mirrored state-wide trends: boys didn't do as well as girls, even though they had the same educational opportunities. One of the GEC's strategies was to improve access to positive literacy role models for boys from Kindergarten to Year 6. *Let's have a story, Dad!* developed from that.

Initially the program was designed to have Dads call into school and read a story from the library to a group of boys. With the primary consideration of "deficit reduction" in the field of male role models, our ideas were brought to ground by the practical implications of access to Dads. Many Dads who might volunteer would have daughters at school and would have equally valid reasons for being male role models for their daughters. Therefore the Committee acknowledged that the target audience would be boys, but that girls would also participate. At a staff meeting the plan for Let's have a story, Dad! was floated. Teachers' concerns and ideas were discussed. Not every teacher was enthusiastic, but all agreed to give the project a go. One specific issue which worried teachers was the unpredictability of a parent visit which might interrupt routines or an important lesson. The staff asked that specific times be made available, and that Dads should have to give prior notice, even if it was on the day. A mechanism was needed which would show who was coming, and when. The Committee wrote a notice for the School Bulletin with a tear-off reply to be sent in advance. The Convenor of the GEC became the project co-ordinator.

We set some limits on the administration of *Let's have a story, Dad!* and decided to restrict it to Term 3. That gave us time to plan and generate a level of expectation. Developing a buzz about the activity and being enthusiastic about its anticipated success added to the commitment and atmosphere. *Let's have a story, Dad!* was something new, and most teachers appreciated its potential. Having a short time frame helped the co-ordinator to keep the project on a high note and not get too exhausted.

In 1995, the program was closely timetabled to suit the teach[illegible]. Specific times when classes were available were listed and adhered to by the co-ordinator. After the first year, we realised that Let's have a story, Dad! was a valid form of literacy development and that the absence from the classroom of a small group did not spoil student outcomes. So in 1996, the timetable became a less structured arrangement of mutually agreed times between the Dad and the teacher. This had its problems. Less enthusiastic teachers and teachers who were busy and out of the classroom found it harder to get organised. Keeping all the teachers and Dads buoyed and on side is very important but difficult to achieve if a co-ordinator isn't there to remind the teacher of the Dad's arrival later in the day. Supervision and security in the library were discussed. The library, where groups could go, has both a terrace and a mezzanine with a tutorial room which became the outdoor and indoor reading areas. The librarian agreed to keep an eye on things for her three days on duty. The staff also decided that Dads who were well-known to us could read on the other two days. Supervision in our school is not an arduous problem, but it is a consideration which must be resolved.



Next, teachers wanted a way to be sure we knew the Dad. The co-ordinator set the ball rolling for each first visit by a Dad with introductions to teachers and as a support for the teacher who might have concerns. Also, the staff agreed that on most occasions Dad would have 2-6 students, one of whom was his own child or relative. We also had the Term 2 parent interviews ahead of us, and teachers knew to take more notice of all the Dads visiting school at that time, not just the Dads of their students. We originally defined Dad as a male parent or grandparent. Then the Principal suggested that local sporting identities might be persuaded to read to the students, so the definition was widened a little. Although the Principal's idea didn't happen, it helped to have a tactic in reserve for specific purposes, such as reluctant students, rewards and media promotion.

Dads, too, needed special consideration. Most had commitments and couldn't spare a lot of time. Asking them to attend on only one occasion made that somewhat easier to "sell". It also allowed for the participation of Dads who could come in their lunch break or on rostered days off, had shift work, were out of town or who came to town for access visits; granddads could also join in. A few Dads did not know where to go at the school. The co-ordinator provided a welcoming face and escort to the right classroom. It makes a big difference if someone is expecting you. From the Dad's point-of-view, the coordinator was the welcoming committee, located in an easy-to-find classroom. From the administration's point-of-view, it was part of the security and checking which we needed. A good location pre-empted the problem of strangers wandering about unchallenged.

Boys were the focus of the project. Teachers sent mainly boys, sometimes in groups of only two or three. Usually the selection was ad hoc, based on class work completed and classroom behaviour. But teachers also had their own agendas for selecting participants: students with difficult paternal relationships, students who rarely had stories read at home, and other unexpressed reasons seemed to characterise a few groups. One class had such supportive Dads that the students had a roster and all attended sessions on more than one occasion. Some Dads didn't mind reading to extra groups from other classes which had received no offers. Because some Dads liked to talk about the story with the students, we realised that there wasn't much time if there were too many in the group. Occasionally, the session lasted up to an hour. We came to discover that four was the maximum size for management by most Dads.

Students were prepared for *Let's have a story, Dad!* at a whole school assembly. Behaviour codes often work for a teacher, but once out of view or earshot, students might be less predictable. With that in mind, the behaviour expectations were discussed in class and reinforced at school assemblies. Poor behaviour or attitude would not be tolerated, and Dads were asked to return the whole group to the classroom if there were any problems. Students were reminded of the behaviour expectations when the Dad collected them. Teachers asked Dads how the students behaved when they came back to class. The comments from this experience showed that Dads were reluctant to return to the classroom if one child misbehaved. It added weight to our belief that four was a maximum size for Dads to manage. Although the teachers were focused on student behaviour, the students were focused on time out of the teacher's orbit. Doing something different was viewed enthusiastically.

The management of *Let's have a story, Dad!* was made easier because the school librarian was on the GEC. Since we were to use the library and many story books were needed, the school librarian was asked whether it would be possible to set aside a collection of stories which appealed to students and could be read aloud in a maximum of 30 minutes. She prepared a mobile book box. The four compartments were separated into stages, Kindergarten, Stage 1,2 and 3. Each compartment contained about ten books which were changed by the librarian a few times during the term as she was on the spot to see the turn-over on at least three days a week. The sides of the box were emblazoned with attractive, fluorescent coloured signs, *Let's have a story, Dad!* Everyone soon knew that the books were earmarked and that Dads would be coming to read stories in the school. Atmosphere and incentive to get Dad involved came from watching this preparation. Promotion by word-of-mouth amongst the students also brought an air of anticipation. The library was not the only source of books, as Dads sometimes brought stories that they wanted to share, stories that they loved as a child, or ones that had read recently which they thought might be appropriate.

How did the Dads get to know about *Let's have a story, Dad!*? Students had seen the preparation in the library. We talked about *Let's have a story, Dad!* at school assembly. Students were also asked to invite Grandads for the occasion, even if they were only visiting Wagga. One Grandad who did find time for a group including his grand-daughter, was our local Member of Parliament. Towards the end of Term 2, the school Bulletin brought the first written explanation and request for Dads to help. A reply form for replies and confirmation by the co-ordinator was attached to the Bulletin. The form included spaces for the name of the student contact and class, and preferred dates and times. Regular update notices were

placed in the Bulletin. One appeared about half way through the third term, extolling the success of the program and including another reply form. Dads and Mums who came to school for other reasons were approached by the co-ordinator to spread the word. To keep a high level of awareness of the project, the co-ordinator also spoke at morning assembly, clutching replies and asking "Is your Dad coming along, too?" or "Who has been to *Let's have a story, Dad!* ?

The result in 1995 was about 150 students had stories read by 22 Dads during the term. The following year, fewer students participated, probably 50. There is no actual record of the number of visits during 1996. The primary reason for the huge difference in the results over two years was the changed management of the project. Personal approaches and maintaining contact are important strategies which the Co-ordinator must use to galvanise interest from Dads.

One of the advantages of an initiative like Let's have a story, Dad! is that small efforts which we might take for granted are valued. Literacy outcomes have not improved ostensibly over two years. Time will tell if the students' attitude to literacy changes. There are indications that dividends are coming from the project. Vignettes of Let's have a story, Dad! come out in students' conversations in the classroom. Recently a Dad asked if the program was going ahead this year. Last year, an annual literacy prize was inaugurated and funded by one family for Presentation Night. The effort needed to put together a range of small projects which run for a short time over a number of years has much to commend it.

Guess Who's Coming to Breakfast?

by Phillipa Becker

Singleton is a mining town situated in the Hunter Valley. A large number of males in Singleton work shift work at the surrounding coal mines and power stations.

At Singleton Public School, male parents were rarely involved in school daily activities due to work commitments so that the children's fathers were seldom able to gain first-hand experiences of day-to-day activities at the school. Most of the parental help at the school was provided by the children's mothers. It was decided to organise a trial dad's breakfast program in 1995. A breakfast seemed to be an excellent option as it was a relatively easy meal for the children to prepare. The breakfast time slot would also ensure the dads were not "tied-up" for the entire day. They would be able to go to work after the breakfast, if required. It also enabled night shift workers to attend after work and gave afternoon shift workers the opportunity to attend before work.

The Kindergarten teachers decided to allow three weeks' notice for the event to allow day shift workers to swap shifts if necessary. The breakfast would also emphasise the importance of eating breakfast to the Kindergarten students. As McDonalds opened in Singleton in 1995 and it was largely viewed as a major treat by the locals, Mrs Levey decided to change her original plans of a school breakfast to a McDonald breakfast. A language unit was programmed by the Kindergarten teachers to coincide with this event, using a McDonald breakfast menu. The children participated in speaking and listening, reading and writing activities.

The dads were invited to school on the day of the breakfast at 9.30 am. Dads travelled from other towns and, on one occasion, interstate for this event. At the school they worked collaboratively with their child in completing a simple menu sheet.

I would like	Dad would like

The dads worked closely with their child. The idea was for the dads to became aware of the children's literacy skills as well as for the children to develop their skills in the process. They then walked to McDonalds (this was to allow time for the dads to talk with child along the way). At McDonalds the dads were free to sit anywhere. Some dads grouped together with their children, while others were happy to

sit alone and chat with their child. Following breakfast, we walked to the local park where the children played with their dads before returning to school.

The positive feedback received by the teachers was overwhelming. The teachers felt that the invitation to dads made them feel very special and worthwhile. Some of the dads had had little or no interaction with schools since they had left themselves. These dads commented on the positive changes and the relaxed atmosphere of schools today. The dads seemed quite thrilled and proud of themselves for making the time to spend with their children and they could see from the children's reaction how excited and pleased it had made them feel.

One problem which did arise from the program was the sensitive issue of single parent families that have no contact with dads, and separated or divorced families. As a solution, the invitation was worded to provide the opportunity for one representative from each family, i.e. male or female, to attend. On some occasions, grandads, uncles, cousins and mums replaced the father figure. In most of the separated or divorced families the father attended the breakfast. Male teachers also volunteered their services, resulting in a 90% male partner attendance.

The initiator of the project, Raylee Levey, was transferred to Howlong Public School in 1996, but the dad's breakfast program lives on!

Fathers and Friends Breakfast

by Alan Small

The Fathers and Friends Breakfast at Central Coast Grammar School was instigated due to a perceived need for getting more fathers involved in the school, getting them to see their children's work, getting them to hear the children present verbally and also getting them to talk with each other and possibly to have a little think about what kind of traits we should be trying to aim for in developing our boys towards their manhood and place in Australian society.

The breakfast was held on a Friday morning, that seemed to be the best morning for them to be involved, and it was a breakfast rather than a dinner so that the children could get integrally involved as well. The children were involved in as many stages as possible at the breakfast: organisational, implementation and, to some degree, follow up. The organisation included asking children what sorts of things they might like to prepare and present. The organisation also involved gathering together four or five teachers and other staff at the school, as well as some parents, to set up our Performing Arts Centre/Hall for the breakfast. We needed to acquire and put into use crockery, cutlery, tables etc, and to generally administer the event and the organisation.

Basically the task was broken into the following lumps, each one governed by a different adult or, in some cases, a child: food and drink preparation, cutlery, crockery and table settings, was dealt with by three ladies; furniture was dealt with by two gentlemen; washing up and clearing up was carried out by several parents and teachers who were present towards the end; parking was hosted by students with an oversight by parents so that no one was run over. Student workers served food and drinks to tables once Fathers and Friends had been seated at 7.30 am, documented the programme, made name tags, created the menu and the different presentations on the morning. Students welcomed and farewelled the Fathers and Friends.

The aim of the breakfast really was to share what goes on at the school, with Fathers and Friends hearing and seeing the learning processes and products for their and other children, as well as Fathers and Friends getting a chance to communicate with each other.

The morning was broken into three separate segments. First, presentations were given by the Junior Choir, the Junior Orchestra and various students, mainly from Years 5 and 6, who volunteered to present. The second section was a workshop run by me, involving questions that Richard Fletcher had raised with our staff at an inservice workshop on boys' education. The basic question was "What sort of men do we, Central Coast Grammar School, want to turn out?" Having asked the Fathers and Friends that question and getting quite a bit of feedback from them about how they see the main traits, I then shared with them the kind of outcomes that we got with our staff and basically it was the same set of words from both sets of people, although the staff list was a result of discussion of female and male staff. I felt that perhaps this was good testament to the need for both genders to be looking towards what kind of things we need to be teaching the boys at the moment. There then followed quite a debate as to whether these matters should be discussed, how they should be discussed, when they should be discussed. The agreement seemed to be, in the short time that we had, that more occasions should be created for men, in particular, to discuss these kinds of matters.

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The third part of the morning was an invitation to the Fathers and Friends to walk across to our main campus site to attend their children's classrooms or indeed anyone else that they would like to visit.

Basically the whole enterprise here was run by our Junior School. Being the Head of the Junior School I sent initial invitation letters to those folk which meant that comments about the breakfast were directed to me. Some of the feedback was quite interesting. The following letter, from a father of one of our Year 1 boys, gives an indication of the thoughts sparked off by the event.

Thank you for organising the Fathers' Breakfast last Friday. The first half of the program was excellent. The second half was interesting in the level of participation from the large number.

Biddulph in "Manhood" makes the point that a boy needs not one, but several mentors, and these from varying backgrounds. The school community must be rich in fathers and grandfathers with widely diverse fields of experience and expertise. And it would appear from last Friday's meeting that many fathers are interested. Can this resource be utilised?

The following are ideas only, and from one with no experience of the school situation, and with very limited experience with children.

1. *Mr Graham Richards, at the Term 1 Forum, offered to take interested students for a holiday extension studies workshop aimed at further developing computer skills. He suggested that other parents with other skills may be able to hold similar workshops.*

   His focus was on the activity - but there may be additional benefits for boys working with adult males who are not teachers. Biddulph makes the point that males with different backgrounds have different philosophies and approach problems from very different directions.

2. *It is possible that more fathers would join the "Parents as Partners" program if the school indicated that there was a role for them.*

3. *Hobby Term: A Sydney school, for years 3 to 6, has an afternoon a week for one term when parents, grandparents or friends either supervise or assist small groups with a hobby - woodwork or pottery or drama, etc.*

   Mothers are heavily represented, but grandfathers enjoy being involved and some fathers are able to make time. It is apparently seen by the school as being very successful. Were it possible to organise at weekends more fathers may be able to take part.

4. *Once or twice each term could a parent visit their own child's class to describe the work they do and the ways in which their work is important to the community? Hopefully fathers would be heavily represented.*

Could this:

a. *provide some sort of exposure to a type of collective male role model*

b. *provide a type of exposure to the living work place*

c. *demonstrate the interdependence of one occupation with another (as the plumber is essential to the veterinary practice, and both depend on the accountant).*

d. *help to bring fathers in from "away-at-work" obscurity*

5. *Have you read Jean Liedloff's "The Continuum Concept"? She refers to the Yequana tribe of Indians in Venezuela, who have no word for work. No-one is pressured to do anything, but everyone joins in and enjoys being part of the group and part of the activity.*

   Is there a place for regular working bees, designed to enable children and adults to work together in an atmosphere which requires effort but at the same time which is fun, and which at the end of the day shows something tangible for the hard work. Followed perhaps by a barbeque and jumping castle (which is blown up after the work is finished), or whatever appeals to older children.

   Again, I don't know schools and I don't know children. And I know layman ideas are too easy, and full of problems. But if there are benefits for boys from interacting with men, and if there is interest and willingness from fathers and grandfathers within the school, it would be good if some way could be found to bring about this interaction.

   Thank you again to all the staff for last Friday's breakfast.

The follow up to the event from all quarters was very, very positive with people giving accolades for all three sections. Quite a few folk were very keen to have a chance to go and see classrooms before they got off to a late work start on a Friday. There was, at the time of the workshop, quite a deal of positive debate and almost a demand for another session to be discussing the issue of boys' futures. There were also many positive comments to the students at the time of the presentations and many, many afterwards to their teachers and also to me. I think probably it was a mixture of the three things, hearing from students, talking to each other and seeing students in action in their normal classrooms which was probably the central winning factor on the day. As far as numbers go there were approximately 80 men (out of about 300 families) in attendance and in this case the whole breakfast was provided by the school with the costs running to $200.

All in all this has been a very successful event and one which we will most probably repeat in the future, hopefully with the same formula but possibly with a longer segment for the workshop part.

The Boys' Talk Program

By Noel Moore, Careers Advisor and Sandie Kennedy, PDHPE

The Boys Talk program at Goulburn High School aimed to improve boys' role models. Fathers were asked to come and talk to the boys in groups for about 30 minutes. Year 8 boys were selected as the audience because the school had identified Year 8 boys as a particular problem. Not that it was just this year. Boys in general were falling behind in all the areas we looked at from prefects through to academic areas. Among other things the boys seemed to see reading and English as feminine, placing more value and importance on science and maths. We picked Year 8 to start early, but after they had established themselves in the school. Fathers were given three questions to address as a basis for their talk:

> *If you were 15 years old, what aspect of your life would you change? What was the most difficult problem you had to solve to advance your career? Why are communication skills so important not only at work but in life?*

What we were trying to do was to change the boys' behaviour and to get them to think about why they did things. A lot of the time when you ask boys why they did things they say they don't know. So this was our attempt to change that, in particular. We had groups of 12 to 15 boys, we had two fathers for each session, they spoke for half an hour each. We did this in three blocks during the year so that all the boys got to hear the dads.

We asked the fathers to relate experiences that would encourage the boys to develop a positive attitude towards school and learning, particularly reading. We asked them to highlight the way that reading and communicating were necessary for employment survival, and many fathers told the boys that the inability to communicate effectively had many detrimental consequences both in the workforce and for family harmony.

Lastly, we asked them to explain the value of academic scholarship, to encourage the boys to taking responsibility for their own learning. Far to often, this realisation comes too late.

To enlist the approximately 50 speakers took hundreds of phone calls. We put letters and notices in the Principals Bulletin, we made announcements on the radio; we put a notice in the paper but we got no response. It really boiled down to making a lot of phone calls and that meant making personal contact to see if they would come. Fathers do have work commitments and that is a factor in getting them to be involved but there are other factors too. Many declined because it is quite a feat talking in front of people, especially if there is a teacher present. A lot of men said that they were too uncomfortable to do it. Also a lot of them didn't want to talk to the year that their son was in, so that we were targeting Year 8 but we didn't have fathers from Year 8, but we had other fathers. We also recruited other men from the community because we wanted good male role models. We did have doctors and lawyers but we also had a builder and an electrician. We particularly wanted those who had had a tough time at school and had still done well. We had one guy who had gone to the school and had a pretty terrible time. He was now running a small business successfully in Goulburn and he wanted to say to the boys, "looking back on it this is what I'd do now". We wanted positive examples who had had a hard time but had achieved things.

One ex-student, for example, went to university but discovered that academic study was not for him. So, he came back to Goulburn and did a variety of odd jobs before deciding to join the Police Service. Then, by coming back into the school as a male role model, he was able to relate well with students undecided about their future directions. Moreover, many students were keen to listen to him because he was much closer to their age.

In the first session the boys were hesitant. But after that they had plenty of questions, we couldn't stop them asking questions. They wanted to know about the fathers' experiences. Some fathers were better at it than others of course, and some were better prepared - when I heard a dad say "I"ll just wing it" I knew it was not likely to be a great session. We do get feedback from boys about how they liked it. Some say it made them think about things differently, but you would have to keep track of it after they left school to see how it really influenced them in the long run. Next year we will try it again in a different format. We'll do more with fathers and surrogate fathers in a games situation with play activities as well as the more serious sessions.

Barry's Story

By Barry

Note: In this and subsequent stories where individuals are described, the names have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

My daughter's school sent home a note asking for parental helpers in their reading program. Things with Sharon's mother weren't the best at this time. I was only seeing Sharon every second weekend (the "usual access arrangement for Wollongong fathers" was how it was explained to me at the Family Court) and I thought it would be an opportunity to catch Sharon in a different environment to that of the frantic week-end dad.

I had some reservations about coming into the program. I knew that I would be the only man and wondered what they might say about my sitting in a room alone with a boy or girl? I kicked myself for thinking this and as the weeks progressed, this fear became groundless. The teacher's friendly approach dissolved my fear that I'd be watched at every moment to see if I was a "danger" to my charges. Nevertheless, it wasn't easy to stroll into the school. I never officially picked Sharon up, but only chatted with her briefly in the playground on the way to somewhere else. I envied those parents who waited at the gate at 3 pm. I craved such bona fide status.

I was a Head Teacher at TAFE at this stage and Friday afternoons were the only time where I could get away. It was a relief to be away from the phone. One Friday I was sitting on a tiny little chair next to five year old Jay, finger poised on a stop watch, ready to time him reading page four of **Ten Go Hopping** when the infants mistress put her head around the door and said my colleague was on the phone and wanted to know where a test paper was. I was surprised at how furious I felt. Another day I arrived at the school near the end of lunch before reading, only to find out from one of her friends that Sharon was away from school. I walked across the playground to the reading room feeling terrible, although I enjoyed the sense of helping "deserving" children it was the contact with my own daughter which was the real payoff. Of course I couldn't very well explain this to the teachers. But, with hindsight, I can see how little they understood of what I was thinking. After mastering the art of timing, prompting, reassuring, praising and joking with the same three children for whom I was a buddy on those afternoons, I still wondered what actual impact I was having. I felt like I wanted to make a difference. Certainly the reading teacher commented each week that the children were improving. I soon discovered, however, that another parent and the reading teacher saw each child at other times throughout the week. So that my feeling of making a difference was diluted even further. This was also because there didn't seem to be much skill involved. I did mark off the sheets the reading teacher gave me and I saw them packed neatly into the teachers folder at the end of the sessions, but I really had no idea of how what I did contributed to any improvement. After all, listening to someone read at a snail's pace was hardly a challenging intellectual task. Also, I never really found an appropriate time to ask about how it all worked and, while I received plenty of genuine thanks and appreciation from the female staff, no-one ever asked me if I was understanding the process or even if I was going OK. Another Friday was magic. I arrived at the school again at the end of lunch with a head full of stress. Sharon and a girlfriend met me at the gate and walked me over to the reading room just before the bell, asking question after question. When I picked up the first reading folder I felt great. And to be fair, I did notice benefits from my reading tuition apart from seeing Sharon. People were recognising me. Kids were actually greeting me by name (Mr of course). On my Canteen roster day each month I felt like part of the school. But I still underestimated the impact of my interest on the students because they didn't demonstrate much enjoyment of our time together. I felt a bit uncomfortable perched on my tiny chair, but the boys (they were mostly boys) squirmed and fidgeted the whole time. At the end of our half hour together they shot off like rockets. So I was left with the teachers' general gratefulness to keep me going. At the end of the program, the reading teacher sent me an invitation to a morning tea with the other helpers and the children. I had to decline because of work but sent little notes to the children. I was sent a letter back with thankyou notes from the children, complete

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with back-to-front 'Rs' and Esses'. A week later, my last canteen day for the year, Jay came up to the counter and asked me why I hadn't come to the presentation. This was from a kid who really hated reading on those Friday afternoons. I felt like a dickhead for not following through by attending the presentation but thanked him for his card.

The next year Sharon moved schools and there was a push at the new school to get fathers involved in reading, particularly for boys. Of course I had noticed that most of the kids in the reading program had been boys. Now apparently the Education Department had caught on too. Again, I saw it as a chance to catchup with Sharon outside the weekends and also get to know some of the boys she went to school with each day. I missed the parents' training session because it clashed with work but rearranged my program to leave Monday mornings free. After the earlier experiences I was less worried about maybe not being good enough and actually looked forward to sitting in the sun with Chris, Danni and Jesse each Monday. I attended pretty well every week for the next two years. Sharon is in high school now and I am about to join her school's reading program. She has always been a good reader. I see her much more these days, so maintaining regular contact is less of a motivation. I still wonder what difference my half an hour each week with Jesse or Chris would make. I see them both occasionally at Sharon's school and they always say hello. Somehow I have slipped into the community of the school, with a relationship not just with Sharon and her teachers, but with her peers. That's not a bad place to be.

Looking to Fathers

By Richard Fletcher

One Night in Newcastle

By the time we finally opened the meeting there were almost 50 fathers present. The air was electric. You could almost hear the men thinking as they looked around "Gee, so many fathers... in one school room... to talk about our kids". It was basically a room full of strangers. Few of the men knew each other, even though they all had children at the high school. We knew that prior to this meeting the biggest male roll-up ever was when four dads came to a working bee putting up the cricket nets.

The large audience made the three of us from the Fathers Against Rape group nervous. As a group of fathers formed to run workshops for boys about preventing rape we had experience talking to boys in groups. And we knew that the teachers and the mothers of the boys approved. What we didn't know is how the workshops would be received by the fathers. That's why we had suggested to the school that they invite fathers to the school.

The principal gave an introduction, indicating his support for the group, and we had the floor. After a short account of our beginnings - the rape of a teenage girl we knew, and the development of the idea of fathers going into schools to talk to boys about rape - we got down to business. We picked three dads sitting near the front and "volunteered them" to answer some questions in front of the group. They looked a bit sheepish but agreed to turn their chairs around to face the audience and try to answer.
We asked them to introduce themselves, including how many kids they had at the school. Then we asked them to say what was good about being a dad, what was difficult and what they'd like to see changed.

The first dad started willingly enough, he was a bricklayer, and a footy coach with two boys and a girl. But he faltered on the question of what was good and we started perspiring as the rest of the room waited while he scratched his head and mumbled. Fortunately though he went on to speak from the heart about what was difficult and the atmosphere thawed noticeably.

What worried him was the realisation that he could no longer properly protect his kids. They were teenagers now and going out in groups or on their own. While he was with them he was confident enough. With some gusto he described the school dance where some "hoodlums" from a nearby pub gate-crashed the dance and threatened the younger boys there. He and some other fathers threw them out and chased them off. But the physical impossibility of protecting all three of his teenagers, protecting them from other teenagers or other men, had recently dawned on him. He felt trapped into helplessness as a result.

The second man, a self-employed businessman, had a boy and a girl. He also spoke best about what was difficult as a father. For him, the long work hours he felt were necessary for his business kept him apart from the family at crucial times like mealtimes. In particular, he noticed that whenever the kids had problems, even if he were at home, they always went to their mum first. Then, if it was serious enough, he would get to hear of it. He also felt trapped. His business needed time and he was missing out on a level of intimacy with his children.

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From there the debate in the room burst out and a host of different questions and opinions flew around the room. Why did schools mollycoddle the students? Why were boys not doing so well? What about unemployment? How could parents stop them smoking when they did it at school? What about drugs and what could parents do about the pressure to buy expensive brands like Reebok and Quicksilver? After an hour or so the focus returned to fathers and how the men present could become more involved in the school. But the only practical suggestion to come forward was for a committee to be formed. Some of the men groaned at this and a representative from the school council pointed out the duplication. At the end no clear direction for further action came out.

Recruiting fathers

As a strategy for recruiting fathers to be involved in the school, this type of meeting is probably a poor model. It starts, if you like, at the "hard end" of male issues - stopping rape and dealing with male violence. Nevertheless, there are some lessons here.

The fact that 50 fathers turned up to discuss their kids suggests that involving fathers in schools is not, as is often said, a hopeless task. It may not be easy, but if it can happen in a fairly mainstream Newcastle suburb, it can happen anywhere. Of course the invitation to the fathers was not to discuss just any old topic. These dads came to discuss boys. Because there has been so little examination of boys' issues over the last twenty years, many parents are still thinking it is only their boy who has difficulties. And because boys' problems are just now being recognised as problems it is important to focus parents' awareness on what we do know about boys issues. Schools are documenting boys' "troubles" in a variety of ways: boys are falling behind academically; outnumbering girls in detentions and suspensions; lagging in key areas such as literacy; and, failing to participate in all the enriching aspects of the school.

This brings us to the second feature of the meeting with fathers. The wide range of concerns expressed. Since few fathers (male guardians) attend school functions, it has been assumed that most fathers have no thoughts on school issues. But at our meeting the men were concerned about curriculum, discipline, behaviour, standards, excursions, job training, school policies, leadership and violence. The breadth and strength of these concerns left us floundering. When the fathers asked if we would continue to meet with them, we said "no". Partly because of work commitments but also because we didn't know what to do next. We were having trouble making sense of it all, let alone finding a clear direction for the group.

If these dads are any indication, just getting men into the school grounds might not be enough. Even if they want to be involved, as these men did, they might not know how to find a suitable role. Schools will have to ask, offer and negotiate with fathers to make sense of their concerns and discover the sorts of activities that fathers see as valid.

Jobs for dads?

The lack of male involvement in schools, apart from male teachers, became a crucial issue for our group, Fathers Against Rape. For over two and a half years we had presented a Stopping Rape workshop to boys in high schools throughout the Newcastle Region. The feedback from the boys and the schools was extremely positive, an effect, we thought, of three related factors. The groups were small, they were all male and they were led by "ordinary" dads. For each group of 15 boys we had a male teacher present, usually as part of the group, and at least two fathers. This gave the workshop both safety and a non-classroom atmosphere. Those of us running the groups did not rely on any authority other than being fathers (the fathers included labourers, tradesmen, ministers and businessmen).

We started the group because a teenage girl in our area was raped. This shocked us into looking at our own children and thinking how we would feel if one of them were hurt like this. We were even more shocked to find out that the chances of a girl being sexually assaulted before she is 18 are about 1 in 3. And that each year the number of boys being raped (by men of course) comes closer to the level of female rape.

When we talked about it, among the fathers, the main lack we could see was that no-one was trying to prevent rapes from happening and also that fathers of girls (and boys) were not speaking up about it. We realised that brothers, uncles, grandfathers, husbands and friends also want to stop rapes happening, but as a group of fathers it seemed particularly important to be doing something in the community.

Since our initial group was fathers, we called ourselves Fathers Against Rape. We started officially on Fathers Day 1992. During the week before September 6th we placed the following ad in the papers under the heading, Preventing Sexual Violence - Fathers Action Group.

> *We are a group of fathers who want to stop rapes happening in our community. If you want to help, call 216444 or write c/- PO Box 87 Adamstown 2289*

That got us started, but not exactly in the way we thought. Not one father in fact responded directly to our ad, except for a nutter who made my blood run cold when he rang my home to tell me what he was going to do to my own children. But indirectly, it worked. It made a public start for us. Through personal contacts and others who had heard about our group starting we eventaually heard of men who were interested. One of the first was Col from the steelworks whose wife had been scared stiff when, as she waited outside a picture theatre, a group of young men jumped all over her car. This incident started him thinking about women's fear of men and what he could do about it. He and I started with one large group of boys in a high school where we knew the welfare teacher. Half way through the session the boys were getting a bit wild and we didn't quite know what to do. Col leaned over to me and whispered "Can I hit em?". He didn't and we fairly quickly realised that small groups were important. Eventually we had about 40 fathers running sessions with boys and holding meetings with fathers from the high schools.

> *The sessions in the schools were just men and boys, we would have about 15 boys and two or three fathers. We asked for a male teacher to be in the room to ensure everything was officially supervised. We used a workshop outline that was worked out by some men in schools in Canberra. Included in the workshop were scenarious such as:*

A girl goes to a party where she flirts with the boys. She goes outside with a boy for a cigarette. He heavies her, pushes her to the ground and although she says, "No" repeatedly, they have sex.

Asked to say whether this was rape or not, and why, produced differing opinions within the groups. The boys were often clear that if force is involved then its rape. But scenarios describing gay couples, prostitutes or married couples, where coercian was involved produced conflictiong views among the boys. We also attempted to point out that boys get raped and molested, but the boys found this impossible to believe.

Other parts of the workshop include talking about the effects of rape on victims - how it affects victims' lives for sometimes years afterwards. When asked if they know of anyone this has happened to, some boy will usually volunteer information (we do not allow names of course). In nearly every group there are some boys who know someone who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

The last part uses a role play of a girl and guy on the couch. He's trying to score, she is telling him, to slow down. We get to the point where he is forcing her and then we stop and ask the boys what they would do in this situation.

The schools wanted more of these workshops. The boysreported that they like it and tell other boys its good "because you get a chance to talk". Even though the workshops themselves were successful, we were unable to convince any but a few fathers from the schools where we worked to help run the program. Looking around the schools, we noticed that fathers were restricted in the things they could do. Official jobs, such as president of the P&C, were all right, but activities such as helping in the canteen, or covering books in the library, seemed taboo for men. We realised too that the fathers we were trying to recruit had no experience of schools seeking them out to work directly with students. After many fathers' meetings we decided that until schools started to see fathers as capable of interacting successfully with students, until schools involved fathers in a whole range of settings so that it would be normal to see a dad in the playground talking to students on his way to some activity, then our group would have little chance of convincing fathers to be involved with something as intimidating as Stopping Rape workshops.

Its is still a good idea for fathers to speak up about rape, of course, while we are waiting for schools to change, and we fathers can do our bit by educating the schools so that they see the important role that fathers could play in creating a better community for all children.

Three Ways to Use a Dad

By Loise Clayton-Jones

Each of these stories happened in a small state primary school in Newcastle, New South Wales. The enrolment of 200 students came from middle class families drawn from the local suburban community. For the most part, students enrolled in Kindergarten and stayed through to Year 6. This gave a sense of stability and strong feelings of connectedness and belonging. During the ten years I was there as assistant principal, increasing numbers of families had both parents in full-time work. Thus, it became increasingly difficult to organise regular parent participation in classrooms. Traditionally, mothers were rostered on to supervise small groups of students in such activities as reading, writing, mathematics, structured play and gross motor skills. The involvement of fathers was traditionally in the areas of working bees, fetes and school celebrations such as Easter, Christmas and Education Week.

The story of Justin ...

Justin was recovering from major brain surgery. He was only a young man, with two sons in the infants grades. But his illness had left its mark - he looked tired, his face was a little screwed up, his smile tentative and lopsided, and his eyes had rather a hunted look.

Justin first came to my attention when the teacher of one of his sons explained why he was so often in the playground at recess and lunch times. Justin was spending quite a bit of time in the infants classrooms, acting as a tutor in play learning situations. At a "loose end", he would often stay on to talk to his sons, or watch them play with other children.

"He is a very sensible parent helper," the teacher told me. "And he has a very encouraging manner with children - you know, helps them without them knowing he's doing it."

In answer to my query about whether Justin might want to spend time in other grades, the teacher replied, "Yes, he probably would enjoy helping with Year Four maths."

The first time I saw Justin after that, he was sitting under the trees with his youngest child, and I remember thinking that he might be trying to make the most of every moment, given what he had been through. With Year Four maths in mind, I put on my "professional" smile and introduced myself and my problem. Year Four was a large class with no parent helper available at maths time to help with the measurement activities. After some reassurance that the activities would be set up for the children to do independently, and that the parent helper was there as a guide and supervisor, rather than as a teacher, Justin agreed to help three mornings a week.

The Year Four students loved him. They all wanted to know if he would be coming again. Many thanked him for explaining things to them. Not only was he able to explain things to them "at their level" (and not all parents can!), he was genuinely caring about each child's feelings. Intuitively, he always found just the right words to keep everyone on task and to make them feel special and that each new achievement, however small, was significant.

Justin's presence was especially helpful for two boys with low self esteem and limited prior success with mathematics. He encouraged them to continue to put in effort past the point when they would have elected to give up. His conversation was peppered with expressions such as, "What do you think might happen if ..." and "Try doing it this way...". Their response to a male was markedly warm and led to success.

Justin's own interest in breeding birds led to further ways the school could use his volunteer time and expertise. After two terms of being closely engaged with various classes, Justin's health improved. He was able to return to full-time work.

The teaching and support staff had grown to know and appreciate Justin; we were all on first name terms and shared the odd "cuppa" with him. His help was acknowledged in the School Bulletin, and he became more widely known to other parents. I like to think that involvement with the school played a part in Justin's recovery, and when I remember the different kind of smile he had after two terms with us, I think I am right.

The story of Brian ...

I first met Brian at a working bee. We were building some quite major garden beds and there was a good roll up of over twenty parents. Brian's wife was there too. It was she who queried me about a proposed after school science club which I had mentioned to a parent several weeks earlier. Evidently there was a network in the neighbourhood quite separate from that which the school encouraged.

I explained my idea to Judy over a shovel and a hole in the ground. She was most interested and could see the opportunities for spreading her own decidedly "green" views on the environment, sustainable development and issues of gender. Both Brian and Judy had considerable expertise and well-informed views on any number of issues. Brian taught computer sciences at TAFE and Judy, an ex-nurse, did charitable work in the community. Our conversation turned into a practical planning session where we laid the foundations, not only of the garden beds, but of an extra-curricular activity which could not have run without parental support. That working bee was the beginning of a wonderful four years of Science Club for our students.

Through their own networks, Judy and Brian provided a stimulating program of "hands-on" science activities, visiting speakers (both male and female - "girls can do science too!") and excursions. They were able to involve other parents to help with supervision and to take over when they could not come. Although it was Judy who did the lion's share of the work, Brian was always a key figure. Sometimes he would

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conduct an active session - like taking apart the motherboards of computers of various vintages. Sometimes he would just be an extra pair of hands. Sometimes he would arrange for another father to conduct a session in his own area of expertise. This helped more fathers to see their children in a learning environment, interacting with their peers and with other adults.

There came the day when they had to relinquish their involvement because they went to live in England for a year. Their own boys were going on to high school after that. They had begun something and made it their own through personal commitment. They were willing to take the initiative and do the organising, and worked as a team.

Although, in this case, it was a mother who "ran the show", I am sure that it was because she had the shared values, practical support and active involvement of her partner to sustain her. It is quite rare to have both parents so actively engaged on a project over such a long term. Our students learned a lot more than science during Science Club. They learned how two adults can work as a partnership. They learned that actions are driven by beliefs and values. They learned that fathers, as well as mothers, can be involved in their children's education.

The story of David ...

David was running his own computer consultancy business from home by the time I met him. He and Narelle had three daughters and a son and Narelle, who used to be an art teacher, was very involved with other mothers in supporting the school. She was at the school almost daily, helping in her children's classrooms and organising the canteen and fund raising. It was during a conversation about my need for a parent to train the debating team that she told me about David's experiences with debating. He had been a member of the debating club in his senior years at high school.

Narelle took home my request. David was tentative - he had not done any public speaking in years. He thought he could remember the basics, and he would have to do some reading about technique. He agreed to spend an hour per week training the team of ten students for the round of five fortnightly debates. I telephoned him and we sorted out the details of where and when. Since he was working from home, it was comparatively easy to fit in times which suited the teachers of the debating team students. Their eldest daughter was in the team and David was happy to give up his time. Having his daughter in the team also gave David confidence that he would be able to relate to the students. He had no experience working with students outside his own family.

One of the issues which concerned David was that he had not done debating since high school. I had to reassure him that such experience was an invaluable resource for the team. I told him that the alternative was for a teacher to train the team "on the run" and I did not have a teacher with debating experience in any case.

"You mean I'm better than nothing," he quipped. David came twice before each of the five debates. He helped the students prepare their arguments and practise their speeches. He taught them all the strategies he had used in his own debating, as well as the rules and procedures. He ferried the team to and from their fortnightly debating engagements. This was important for the school, since sending a class teacher meant splitting up that teacher's class for anything up to three hours. The alternative was to arrange transport with another parent who had not trained the team. The best arrangement was for David to take the team. He could then encourage them by his presence during the debate, as well as assess their level of performance and where he needed to give them further training.

From time to time, arrangements had to be changed since David's business was growing rapidly and business meetings, often in Sydney, became more frequent. David's contribution to the school was, of course, more than training the debating team. During the six months he came, he provided a clear message to all the senior students that highly developed thinking and communication skills were to be valued. For other parents, he also was an example that fathers, as well as mothers, could be involved in the core work of the school - nurturing young minds. For the teaching staff, he provided an extra-curricula activity which we would have been hard pressed to provide without him.

When I tried to organise a parent to train the debating team the following year, it was clear from discussions that parents viewed David as a special case. They felt inadequate to follow someone who was running his own business, and computers at that. They also felt that debating was a specialist field in which they had no experience. This meant that a teacher with no debating experience had to take on the team . The fact that his involvement was comparatively short term does not in any way diminish David's contribution to the life of the school. Schools tend to have "revolving doors" - parents come into programs and go out again, each adding richness to children's experiences.

Lets See What Happens

By Chris MacLachlan

Early one March morning, 15 girls and 11 boys from Class 6 boarded a school bus and headed west. With them were the male teacher, three fathers and a mother. Two of the fathers had daughters in the class, the other a son.

These adults were veterans of many school camps but were nonetheless being driven to exasperation by the anti-social behaviour of the boys. By the first night the teacher was ready to turn the bus around. On the second day, with perseverance, they arrived at their destination, Willandra, a converted sheep station now grazed by kangaroos and emus.

During the third day the adults realised they had been presented with a gift, the boys' behaviour had degenerated to be totally unacceptable. The men brainstormed, philosophised and soul searched, seeking a solution based on care and love and not one coming from the need to control or chasten. The result was incredibly simple. "Let's just sit around a fire with them and see what happens".

One father found a suitable area in the bush and built a fire. After dinner and wash-up fifteen of us, four men and eleven boys, headed into the night. With only the leader and rearguard with torches we threaded their way through the tangle of forest to what was to become, by the very nature of the work done there that night, the sacred campfire space.

First, care was taken to establish a physical and emotional space that was honest, safe and nurturing, yet challenging. A method of council with a "talking stick", used by native Americans, was adopted to encourage and facilitate the skill of being able to listen, to be there for whoever holds the stick, and not to interrupt. Sitting around the fire for nearly four hours was an epic in itself. A lot of the boys had very short attention spans unless something captured their imagination. Their imaginations were on fire out in the bush that night.

The boys talked with us deep into the night and touched on deeper spaces within themselves. It felt as though we were performing some ritual from a time when men had it clearly in their collective consciousness how to facilitate emerging young men into manhood. Secrets were shared, fears expressed. Most of the boys didn't have a father at home. Anger, hurt and shame were allowed to surface. Men and boys laughed and cried freely. Common notions of hard masculinity were challenged by vulnerability, honesty and respect.

For the remainder of the week there were distinct changes in the boys' behaviour. Their attitudes toward each other, the girls and adults was relaxed and co-operative. They were happier. When they arrived back in the Blue Mountains two days later, still charged from their campfire ritual, there was unanimous agreement they should follow up what they had done in some way very soon.

One of the men contacted some friends from his men's group who also have children at the school and in the following months they formed a group of 10 men who met to discuss the work. Six of them went on to work together, on their own process as well as with the boys. Each month they had an overnight camp with a campfire council as well as other activities. Usually these camps took place in carefully selected wilderness areas, although one was conducted on the school premises and worked quite well.

As these activities progressed, interest sparked in other areas of the school. The mothers in the same class began to work with the girls. Parents in Class 5 and Class 7 began to work with their kids. The teachers noted the changing attitudes of the children and were encouraging and supportive. There was talk of establishing a program at the school that introduced the students to principles of open sharing in council, drawing on the resources of the parent body, and prepared them for adolescence from kindergarten. Clearly the boys in Class 6 had been ignored for too long.

Being Like a Dad

Imagine this. You're 10 years old, and trying your hardest, but things don't seem to be going right. At school you seem to get into trouble more than the other boys. Reading is a slog and the maths doesn't often come out right. You end up outside the principal's office pretty often. At home your Mum says that you're a handful. She takes you to training when she can, but you often have to miss things. Sometimes when you're playing cricket in the backyard she comes out and joins in, but you can tell she doesn't like it that much. Besides there's your little sister to take care of. All in all you wish your dad was still around.

This is the opening paragraph of a letter from Paul Harragon, international rugby league player and captain of the Newcastle Knights football team to various men's clubs around Newcastle. Paul Harragon is also a patron of Homelink, a scheme for linking adult volunteers with at-risk students. The letter was part of an attempt by Homelink to recruit more men to volunteer. Although the program has been running for several years, with excellent results, the co-ordinators had recently changed their approach to male volunteers. In previous training courses there was often a single male among the ten or twenty females. As part of the community-wide interest in boys and men's issues, the co-ordinators began to question the acceptance of the status quo - that men would never be involved. First they changed their advertisement from one which talked about friendship and support and targeted "people" to one which appealed specifically to men to help out. Once men began to express interest they found that their guidelines for supervising volunteers needed revising. The training course content and presentation changed to accommodate the greater presence of men in the groups.

As a community we have been used to men (fathers) volunteering for certain jobs. Joining the Bush Fire Brigade, coaching sports teams and, in schools, undertaking "masculine" tasks, such as landscaping, or chairing a meeting, have been seen as proper unpaid activities for men. But increasingly it is being recognised that fathers can also play an important role as volunteers with children and young people.

Some of the volunteers in these stories are more clearly "being a dad" than others. Saying that fathers (that is, older males with parental responsibilities and skills), are important does not mean that any man will do, or that boys can be assisted only by men. And promoting father involvement is not in any way to criticise the mothers who are raising children on their own. There is no question that these women do an amazing job in difficult circumstances. But, as the first story in this section illustrates, there may be a great sense of relief for mothers in not having to do everything, not having to be both mother and father to their children. In a community sense we want to do more than not blame single mothers. We need to take some responsibility, as a community, for the welfare of children. Male volunteers can be an important part of community support for young people.

In case this all sounds very new and untested, we should recall that supporting single mothers with their children was, at an earlier time in Australia, definitely a man's job. After World War I, when many widows were raising young children, Legacy sponsored a home visiting program by returned soldiers. Today, of course, the ma¡ority of single mothers are divorced, not widowed, so that there are more tensions and complexities surrounding their families. But inviting and encouraging men to be father-like figures for the children and youth in our community is precisely the sort of courage and bravery we now need. Below are descriptions of men "being a dad" from both perspectives. First from a mothers' viewpoint, Lesley describes her own initiatives to have her son properly "fathered". Next Terry, Ken and Tony describe their own volunteer efforts and satisfactions involving young boys. Finally, Joseph Furolo tells of his new career as a male guardian to a young man and a young woman.

Wow, This Really Works!

By Lesley

About 18 months ago, I noticed that my son was behaving in ways that were different to the way that my girls behaved at the same age. My son is eight years old and I am a supporting sole parent so we didn't have a man permanently around the house at the time. Jeremy wasn't involved with a lot of men because the men in my family tend to take off or are not there; I mean they may be there but they are "not really there", so there wasn't a lot of interaction with men.

The relationship he had with his dad was, at that time, not going very well. Although inside himself he knew that he was very much loved by his dad, the interaction wasn't the best. Sometimes visits would go wrong, and his dad was having lots of problems. But right from an early age he never really played with girls' toys; it was always in the sand pit or with trucks or boys' type toys and he became clingy around men. If men came around or even family members or male friends, he would become clingy towards

them and spend time with them no matter how they treated him. Even if they were quite nasty to him he just wanted to go back for more. That was when I realised that he needed to have a positive interaction with males in his life and we needed to work at getting that in there, so that he could feel safe and respected. He deserved to be respected and he deserved positive male attention. He didn't deserve negative attention, so if that's what he was getting we needed to change that. I had read some books on men and I had read Manhood in particular, and that's what motivated me to realise that my son needed male interaction and also the realisation that I couldn't be both mother and father and all I could do was the mothering. He had to get fathering from someone else, men. I decided to take one of the suggestions from the book and organise a group of men within our family to spend time with my son doing activities, or anything that they wanted to do with him, and that he felt safe with and that he was comfortable with.

I remember approaching, I don't think I approached my dad first, probably my eldest daughter's boyfriend. My oldest daughter, she was nineteen at the time, her boyfriend was twenty and then my other daughter's boyfriend was nineteen, she was sixteen at the time. I asked the oldest boyfriend first, and he was quite, "Oh yeah, that will be easy" and then when I got down to specifics it was "Oh I haven't got time I'm too busy, I'm too this, I'm too that" and "Yeah I'll soon lick him into shape" and all this sort of stuff. So once we got through all that, we came back to the arrangements, he was really only available once a fortnight or something like that.

It was quite hard, because it was very confronting for me to approach male people, especially in my family to ask for this, because I could actually see myself asking for help, and asking for help from the male members of my family was very hard. When it came to asking my dad he was sort of "Oh yeah", but nothing came from that and I found that he was really too hard. I had to have an idea of what I wanted and knew that I wasn't going to accept defeat and that I would just keep pushing. I just kept plugging away. When these issues of discipline came up, I just had to say "No, I don't want you to discipline him, but if he is doing something unacceptable to you then you can tell him or whatever". I had to lay down, no hitting, we certainly don't hit in our family, not anything like that, so he needed to look at other ways in being with Jeremy to benefit him as well. We discussed all this quite solidly for about four to six months and then started; then it was really beneficial.

My eldest one would go and take him to play football and they would take him to places like Timezone and just to the park sometimes. They would just go to the park and take the dogs for a walk. The youngest one, the youngest girl's boyfriend, he had a motorbike, so he would take him for a ride on his motorbike and if they were going looking at motorbikes he would take him looking, sometimes looking at cars and things like that.

Jeremy seemed to take on a different level of self esteem after a while. He looked like he thought that he was equal to anyone and that he could get his needs met through other people, that I couldn't meet. The realisation that I couldn't meet those needs, the needs can only come from a male, well I felt and he felt could only come from men. That was a relief I can tell you. When the girls were young and I had separated from their father, I took on the role, I'd be trying to be both mother and father and it was a total disaster. So when this was happening with Jeremy, when it looked like I would have to do everything, I thought "I just can't go through this again". So when it worked, when going off with the older males worked it was like, "Wow this really works!" and, yeah, it gave me a big boost to think that I was doing something that was different, that was hard for me to do because I had to let go of a lot of my own control issues that I wanted for my son and also the people that were involved - the males I had to trust - I had to trust that he wasn't going to be hurt. We did lots of protective behaviours with him first, and that was one of the rules that we put down with the guys that he has the right to say what he wants to say, and if he's feeling anything then he can say it.

At first I checked with him after they'd done something together. As it sort of got on and the trust issues got better, just from Jeremy's behaviour I knew that he was OK and even in some respects with his dad, that's helped too. Now I figure it is OK to let Jeremy make his own decisions to go out there and to contact his dad when he wants to, or needs to, and to have interaction with him, and now I don't feel quite so scared as I use to. But I think that's got a lot to do with teaching him protective stuff, that he has the right to have contact and his dad has the responsibility to make sure it's safe.

The whole contact thing with the men has tended to slacken off in the last six months, but I don't see that now as being the same need that was definitely there 18 months ago, two years ago. Every now and again we will talk about getting a group going again, he still has a relationship with two of the men involved, but right now he is quite comfortable about that. But I think he is getting to a stage where he is looking again, starting to look again for more involvement, so I will have to start thinking about it again. Especially since I now see what happens at school with boys. I think its even more important.

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One Hour a Week Can Help

by Terry

I first became interested in volunteer work after I retired in 1993. After about four months I became bored with the inactivity, then I happened to see a notice in the local paper where the St. John Ambulance Community Care Branch needed people with spare time to be trained to work with young children who were having problems with literacy. I discussed the idea with my wife who supported me. I made contact with the St. John's people and decided to take the training programme.

The training involved six two hour sessions and covered such things as: what is literacy?; how do we learn to read?; reading and writing strategies; and, values and attitudes. At the course I attended, there were 15 people involved, of whom three were men. There were discussion sessions when we would talk about things like family values, support for young children and the effect of family breakdown on children with literacy problems. There were role playing sessions in various situations. At the end of each session we took a multiple choice answer paper on the subject covered in te session. You needed a 90% pass, over the six test papers to pass.

Those of us who decided to take up the Program to Aid Literacy (PAL) were allocated a student at a school involved. I was sent to St. Joseph's School, Riverwood, situated in Sydney's South West. I was given a seven year old boy who was experiencing difficulties with class activities and needed encouragement to complete given tasks. I discovered very early that he had poor communication skills and very little eye contact. He hesitated with his answers and wasn't sure when he spoke. His reading skills were poor, as was his spelling. He would get "on" instead of "no". He couldn't read a short sentence all together. But he was keen to learn, he never wanted to go back to the class. He was a soccer player. When we started to talk about this he was enthusiastic. To get him to concentrate I had a series of games with him, matching two figures in blocks. He had to sit there and study it. Also repetition. Today I said this to him "Do you know what a sentence is?" "No" he said, so I explained it to him. And then I said " So when I come back in two weeks time I want to ask you the same question and I want you to answer it". I think he will. When I first started with him he couldn't answer if you asked him "What did we do last week?" We are also doing his times tables. We started with addition and then subtraction. I get him to do them in a limited time. The teacher and I figured out it should take him about 3 minutes. So I time him. The remedial teachers sees him and so does another volunteer, a woman. They say he responds better to me because I'm a man.

With the support of the school staff and facilities available, the boy's skills soon improved. From the feedback I get from his teachers, he can now cope with his classwork. However, he still needs encouragement to complete assignments.

In the three years I have been involved with the PAL programme, it has given me enormous satisfaction to see the young man progress from a shy little boy to a confident lad who, I have no doubt, will improve as he gets older. He has impressed me with his willingness to listen and the effort he puts in during our one hour a week sessions. One hour a week may not sound a lot, but what can be achieved in that time can be of great help.

An Awful Lot of Satisfaction

By Ken

As an adult literacy tutor in Broken Hill, I formed the clear opinion that adults shouldn't have reached their stage of life and still have trouble with reading and writing. The place to start doing something about it was the formative years. So, having retired some time before, I was interested to see the advertisement for Literacy tutors, PALs, being organised as a pilot program by St. Johns. At the course I was only man alongside about twenty women, and while other men have completed the course, I am the only active male tutor at present.

My first PAL was Mark who was not really bad at his reading, but just not interested. The school recommended Mark for the program and his parents gave approval. One of his parents said they'd like to meet with me, but that never happened.

Every Tuesday and Friday morning I'd go to the school to help with his reading. Mark was hard to get to know since I was trying to talk to him without inquiring too much into his family background. As they had emphasised in the training, the foundation of what we were doing was building self esteem - getting the child to realise that there is someone who is interested in him. After about five minutes of me trying to start a conversation with him, Mark said "When are we going to do some work?". I was a bit taken aback, but we started.

He wasn't interested in doing much. Because he was out of class to do reading with me, he had that as an incentive. If he really didn't like it he knew he could always go back into the class. It wasn't until I found the thing he was really interested in, bullriding, that we began to get somewhere. After that things improved. By the end of the year he had improved out of sight. After two years he moved on to primary school. I have not seen him since, but I understand from others that he's doing fine. Looking back on it I can recall the frustration, there can be a lot of that. But if you succeed there's an awful lot of satisfaction too.

Achieving Success

By Tony

I suppose I first got involved when I realised that there were some problems with the way kids are growing up, some of the problems that they have to deal with, the way they are being treated. I saw some problems with my own children and there wasn't anything that I could do about it and also decided that I'd like to be able to do something for the large community. So I just happened to hear about Homelink, it sounded interesting so that's the way I went.

Of course when I walked into the training and saw a room full of women I thought "Christ! What am I getting myself into?" I mean, I work as a seaman in a very male dominated environment, I just don't get to mix with women. But everything went smoothly, I wouldn't say I was comfortable, but I wasn't uncomfortable either.

The issue of the way men might be seen "doing the wrong thing" with children was mentioned in the course. Suggestions were made as to what to do, for example, always remaining in a public place, where you can be seen. Although I am always mindful of it, I suppose, it hasn't really arisen. I have taken Ian out on a trip camping with my son out in the bush and away from everybody else, but that was after we had sort of established everything between us. I had seen his mother several times, she was quite happy and also my son was there, they got on OK together. That was really the only situation. Oh, I have taken him fishing but that was with another friend of his.

I like seeing that improvement, knowing that I had a contribution to the community to the life of a child, you know. There is a famous saying that says something like "If you do nothing but influence a life of a child for the better, then you have achieved success". So, that's really good to be able to see I've made a difference there and I suppose the relationship, having a good relationship with them is good.

Of the two boys I am linked with, Billy and Ian, I can see the results better with Billy, I guess because he is younger. I've really seen some changes there in only six weeks. The teachers have noticed changes and I've noticed changes in him. He was getting picked on a lot and he wouldn't mix. He thought he was above everybody else. Now, well, one of the things he said was that he hated playing soccer and yet yesterday he said "I played soccer and I had a good time and nobody's been picking on me". I can't say that's just because of my influence, but nobody else can put it down to anything else either. There was one day he was having a really bad day and I was there at the right time. We had a really good chat about it and things are going good now. With Ian I'm not getting the same results, but I'm still prepared to work, and Ian and I still have a good relationship as I see it.

Becoming an Advocate and a Guardian

By Joseph Furolo

Three years ago, I'd just about completed setting myself up with a place of my own to live in and didn't need to spend as much "future-oriented" energy. I was doing shift work (computers in the airline industry) which I at once loved and loathed. I was single, never married and unlikely to do so, but had what I thought was a genius for friendship. I knew how to be close friends with many people but knew nothing of the dynamics of exclusive relationships. I had just begun my early middle life, just when most of my close friends and family were settling into committed relationships. In a revelatory moment, I had come to the decision to "get involved" (again!).

During one of my days off work I was in Martin Place during Volunteers Week. There was a stall and people promoting the benefits of volunteering. "At last", I thought, "Perhaps I might be able to get into an organised network of like-minded people". I collected heaps of brochures and went home to sort through it all.

The areas I finished up focusing on were the Big Sister/Big Brother program and, through an advertisement I saw in the paper about the same time, Barnardos Australia. Big Sister/Big Brother has been run by the YWCA in Sydney for the last 19 years. It arranges and supports matches for children between 7 and 17 years who would benefit from a relationship with a safe, reliable adult who will be the child's friend, meeting once a week. There are also regular program activities where the "bigs", "littles" and parent/s spend time together as a group. Barnardos is a well established and reputable family support, child and youth care agency. I applied to Barnardos Adolescent Services program, available to assist in offering care for young people aged 12 to 18 years.

I attended the training for Big Sister/Big Brother and Barnardos (over different times). If I recall correctly, for each program there was only ever one other male volunteer involved.

Being a volunteer with these groups did require making time, undergoing training and connecting with other volunteers and program workers. The Barnardos team were supportive and affirming of what they felt I could offer kids in crisis. I was surprised and elated at their assessment of me. They were eager to arrange a match for me as soon as possible. To help, when it looked like a placement would be imminent, I bullied my way into day work shifts and no working weekends so I could provide more stable support for any young person assigned to me. But I was on the waiting list for over 12 months before anything happened.

As should be the case, all stakeholders must be happy with placement arrangements for a young person needing care. I had been put forward by Barnardos on many occasions as a possible carer but invariably my "male" and "single" status was alarming to one or more of the stakeholders. On three occasions the match was about to proceed but last minute misgivings about the same issues meant another rejection.

My Barnardos Co-ordinator, in a well-meaning way, suggested making arrangements to change to another program since it seemed they were unable to match me. I was very hurt. I felt obliged to accept their advice but after 12 months regularly attending carer training and building up a relationship with other carers and supporting them with their placements by listening while they downloaded about what was going on for them at home, I decided I was not going "to give up" - if their confidence in me was well-founded, something would develop and "when" didn't really matter. Shortly afterwards, Jacqueline chose me to be her Barnardos carer.

Jacqueline was 17 years old and had been a State Ward since 13 and was coming to the end of her wardship. An independent, intelligent and focused person, Jacqueline didn't want another "family" situation. She seemed to like what I could offer - space, safety, some tuition, survival skills for independent adult life and a great network of family and friends that valued me.

Early on we dealt with how we should "explain" each other to people outside our immediate circle. We are of different ethnic backgrounds and when people see us together you can tell they are often curious about our relationship. If they don't ask, you can see some "neurolinguistic conjecture" happening about our relationship, perhaps according to their prevailing views of what adult single men and beautiful young women might have in common.

Jacqueline made it clear that foster father/daughter was definitely out. Community carer/ward was not much better and still unacceptable. Of all the tags we could use we settled on guardian/boarder for the early stages of our relationship. Jacqueline, I think, felt good about being able to talk about an adult male as "her guardian", with the strength, protection and advocacy that implies. Now we are very comfortably and proudly "friends". Both of us feel lucky that, when talking to friends and acquaintances, they express surprise and delight that an adult and a teenager can have a friendship as fruitful and supportive as any among age peers.

During the placement, Barnardos provided regular support by meeting both Jacqueline and myself individually and together at least monthly and to make sure any issues were being dealt with. At 18, when Jacqueline's Wardship Order expired, we planned to continue together on a mutual basis and Barnardos assisted us in designing our current boarding arrangement, which started early in May 1997.

For both of us though, our relationship is "home based", where each can bring friends and family, but the space is "ours". We talk about what's going on for us, what's happening to the important people in our lives, getting the shopping list right, vying for Portia's attention (our fat, black, former supermodel cat). I get to share Jacqueline's joy at moments of insight. Jacqueline gets to hear me explode at the latest political sham poncing around on TV. We talk about work, argue about Michael Jackson and have the occasional standoff over a cleaning up demarcation dispute. When sick, neither of us are good company but we each get good care. On the weekends, we know where each of us is and what we're doing, who we're with and how much fun we're having (or not). Just two friends, watching out for each other.

When Jacqueline is ready to make a move on her own, I will be available for another Barnardos placement. We've agreed on aiming at six months from the commencement of our private arrangement. But with our status as friends, there will be an ongoing and significant relationship between us.

As with Barnardos, my experience with the Big Sister/Big Brother Program has also become very significant for me, especially after I was matched with Michael, my Little Brother .

Our match started auspiciously. Michael and I seemed to really hit it off right from the beginning and we developed a quick and easy kinship between ourselves, encompassing my family and siblings and his extended family network. Michael was 13 years old, of Turkish and English ancestry and the oldest boy in an extended family of gran, mum, an aunt, four younger female relations and a young brother.

School seemed to be failing Michael. He gained a reputation as having ""behavioural problems". For almost two and half years, he had been on "red report", virtually sentenced to a never ending cycle of reporting, atoning, detention, isolation and counseling. The rules for getting "Off" report were so complex (and changeable), even I had difficulty figuring out how to help commute his sentence. Whilst on this level of report, every teacher for every class had to rate his performance. So much paper. So many signatures. So many rules. It was easy to get on report but to get off it felt like you needed a secretary, filofax and a copy of Justinian's Commentaries on Roman Law.

On "red report" the school was obliged to advise his mum of all and any behavioural issues. It got to the stage she felt like she was being "stalked" by the school. No amount of conferences, contracts, special programs seemed to reduce the number of dreaded phone calls - irregular, unpredictable, but constant reminders of vulnerability and an imputed "failure". Discussing the situation with the Big Sister/Big Brother coordinator, we both decided we would get involved in Michael's school situation. It was an eye opener for me. No-one can say teachers don't have a lot - too much - to deal with. They are blamed for a lot and have dwindling resources to do anything. But I was on Michael's side and I was a fierce and trying advocate in that velvet hammer world of "workshopping" problem students.

For a start, we insisted that, from now on, Michael be present and included in any school conferences deliberating about his future. Perhaps he just might feel a little more in control of what was happening to him if he wasn't always standing outside the door, waiting on a verdict.

There were changes for Michael. I saw him grow in self confidence, stature and self control once it was clear to him that he and his family could rely on support from me and the program in their efforts to negotiate his way through school. He finally got off red report (after so long, he still automatically fronted up to the deputy principal's office as part of his morning routine for a while). He even won a prize for the most improved student (academically!).

Michael is proud, loyal and feisty. It was agreed that the school would ring me with details of behavioural mishaps. If it was a run-in with a teacher, a bit of questioning showed that often, the teacher's behaviour was as inappropriate as Michael's. It's just that in a battle of wills at school, the child must lose. An altercation with a teacher which ended in each physically attacking the other meant the school determined they could no longer meet his needs and he should attend a special school.

The change in school was right for Michael, not simply because he was better suited elsewhere but because he and his old school were in a dysfunctional relationship that really had no future. I am now an active and committed advocate for education reform to recognise and meet the needs of boys in schools.

Through all this and on our weekly get-togethers, I found Michael to be a great friend and teacher. I learned about rap, ghetto boys, tagging, street dangers, rock climbing and dress style (Homeboy, that is). Sometimes we'd go to Warragamba Dam, check out the city or the ocean. We might go with my other brothers for a bash in the four wheel drive. We've handed out leaflets, slashed and burned the garden, half built a fish pond, gone fishing, crabbing, driving, training, enjoyed family BBQs, gone to Italian restaurants for family birthdays, done ferry trips, gone bushwalking (well, Georges River saltpans is pretty bush for us), snapped photos, visited the doctor (toenail maintenance), survived a car crash, helped renovate my sister-in-law's vet clinic, and pigged out in front a lot of movies and videos.

One of our great activities (for me) has been Michael's involvement in our family winemaking antics. All my siblings, their partners, their pets and other family/friends get together to eat, crush and press grapes, pass and bottle the wine, eat heaps of bread, cheese, salami and olives and finally, label the bottles with "Casa Furolo - Fine Red Wine - Winemakers to Julius Caesar" (a little family mythology). A proof set of all the wine Michael has helped us make is laid down in the cellar, waiting for his eighteenth birthday.

With Michael and Jacqueline in my life I'm a happy man. My relationships with my family and close friends have been redefined and reinvigorated by the shifts in my emotional landscape they have brought about. Whereas previously I'd always been acknowledged by family and friends as a loving, caring and strong person for them, they now explore my expanding circle of care with me, and show great interest in Michael and Jacqueline's wellbeing. In turn, both are able to call on the differing expertise of people in my circle. Perhaps they have not only found a friend and true brother in me but also a significant network of admirers, supporters and mentors in my circle.

My volunteering and involvement in care has changed my life. Firstly, I have someone else in my home for the time being - Jacqueline - to consider in any decisions I make for myself, to discover and share new experiences, to exchange stories of how things are for each of us, to learn from her, her friends and her experience and to be there for her as a man, an adult, a friend, a resource - a guardian (I love that word!). Also I look forward to spending time every weekend with Michael who has brought such richness, fun and affirmation to my life as a man. I recognise myself in him. I respect his loyalties to family and friends. I feel privileged to be able to defend and support him now as he prepares for his own journey as a man.

And What About the Future?

At the time of writing, the role and place of fathers in our community is being debated with some vigour. In business and industry, the issue of fathering (men's connection to their families) is moving from the fringe to the centre of discussions about productivity, industrial relations and success. Government and non-government organisations are beginning to notice that half of the parents of the next generation have been overlooked. The exclusive focus on fathers as providers (willingly or not) is being supplemented by efforts to engage fathers in the care and development of children and young people.

The article below should not be taken to suggest that governments can be expected to solve this issue single handed. But it does point to some of the developments we might encourage, from government, industry and community groups in a preferred future.

FROM THE MINISTER FOR FAMILY MATTERS
6th SEPTEMBER 2001

Speech given by the Minister assisting the prime minister in Family Matters on the launch of the FATHERCARE PROJECT, Canberra,

Madam Prime Minister, distinguished guests, friends. As I was driving here today I passed through a section of my constituency which has, over the 20 years I have been a resident, been known as a rough area, an area where you wouldn't leave your car unlocked; certainly an area where you wouldn't go alone, especially if you were female. I am pleased to say, of course, that my department has begun to take action in districts precisely like this one. To address many of the deep social problems which throw a shadow across the bright future of our country.

However, what I want to tell you about is not the broad social parameters of change but a tiny incident. A minute example of the specific changes that we are here about today. Because while stopped at a traffic light I saw a small child , probably about four years old, trip on a piece of scaffolding set up across the footpath and hurt herself . Before the lights had had time to change, two men, one about 18 or 20 and the other an older man had gone to the child, picked her up, dried her tears, dusted her off and soothed her distress. From my observation, neither of the men knew the girl. One came from a shop across the road, the other from the building site behind her. They asked her name, they acted respectfully concerned as you would with a hurt child who you didn't know, and - and this is the part that took my attention - neither of them looked the least bit self-conscious about what they were doing, neither of them looked around for a woman to fix it, or to check if other men might sling off at them for their tenderness, or maybe someone accuse them of nasty intentions.

What we as a community are starting to realise - and the program we are here to launch today is evidence of the change in our thinking - is that if we get off the backs of the men in our community, if we put in place the structures, the institutional arrangements, which will allow men to interact well with children, then forcing men or punishing men to make us more caring, to make us more considerate of others, is totally unnecessary. We (that is men) already have all the programming we need to be caring. We have the software inside us to allow us to be caring. What we need is the hardware in the community, the systems in place to allow and encourage that caring to come out. And that is precisely what this project we are here to launch today is designed to do.

No project, no one system of course can, by itself, bring about the sort of change we are looking for in our community. Most of you will have seen the Minister for Justice's statement on physical punishment of children, and many would know that we are in the process of adopting the Scandinavian sick leave provisions for male carers as part of the gender reform of our industrial relations system. But we want to go beyond removing impediments to actually valuing male carers in our community, and that is what we are about today.

The Father Care Project is a comprehensive, multi-level package which has one simple premise and one simple aim. The premise is that adult males have an important role in all aspects of caring for children, public and private. The aim is to have more frequent, more enjoyable, more socially productive interactions between fathers of all descriptions and the children in our communities. Dads, and here I mean of course not just biological fathers, but uncles, so called defacto fathers, older male friends - men, in short, from

our community - are to be encouraged to spend more time in more mutually productive ways, with a variety of children in their locality. This activity will take place in schools, in parks, in organised activities and recreational and social settings. In their participation, these men will fundamentally challenge the notion that children somehow belong, are the responsibility of, and should be exclusively or predominantly cared for by, women. This Project, and the other measures my government is undertaking in the same vein, are not in any way an attack or a criticism of the mothering and caring already done by women in our community. This Project has the full and enthusiastic support of every major women's association in the country because it will benefit every member of the community. For too long the expectation that women would take care of the children has been a central part of our thinking. In challenging this assumption we also need to make perfectly clear that a parallel assumption has been just as powerful in limiting the lives of parents, children and community members in general. This assumption is that men are somehow genetically or wilfully incapable of providing consistently loving and competent care for children. It is this assumption that we wish to expunge from our policies, our work practices, our schools and child care centres. This is a two sided process, men have been told, for ever and a day, not only that children are women's work, but that men are constituted differently, that we are naturally suited to competitive games and war and striving for material achievement, but that we do not have, and could not possible achieve, the skills and competencies to successfully interact with children.

Some of you will be thinking of your own children, and the enjoyable times you have had with them. You may be wondering if I am exaggerating the bleakness of this picture of what men have been told. Let me say firstly that we have been very mindful of the trap of thinking that all men are the same. As I hope will be clear from the description of the project which follows, we have gone to considerable trouble to build an array of strategies to address the needs of different groups of men and children in our community. But before detailing the way that this project hopes to address the caring father issue, let me first point to the evidence that we do not already have sufficient male involvement with children at any age.

From the annual surveys published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, we know that across Australia the average time spent by adult males one-to-one with their own children - and I stress this is their own children - not the broader focus of this Project, averages 47 minutes per week. That is an increase of course on the previous years, and the trend is definitely rising. But there are few who would say that this amount of time is sufficient. When we break this into occupation groups some important differences arise. Contrary to the view that richer is better there is no correlation between income and time spent with children. Among the unemployed, and among professionals, for example there is enormous variation. Some men manage to spend considerable time in child-based activity, others spend less than the average.

But the family setting is not the only place where children encounter adults, and it should not be the only place where we look to improve the relationship between children and fathers and adult men in our communities. In preparing for this Project my department commissioned a variety of ground-breaking research into the issue of children's contact with men. One measure examined was just how much time was spent, not in the home with mother or father, but how much time the average child spent with adult males throughout their whole day. We conducted a gender audit if you like, totting up the hours a child spends with men or women during the week. We did this in different locations where children, from pre-school age to teenagers, spend their time.

The findings are, in a sense, what you would expect. Everyone knows that there are more female primary school teachers and nurses than there are males. But it may be a shock to you (it certainly was to me) to see the extent to which males are removed from the world of children. Here are just some of the percentages, of the percentages of the week the average child spends with female, that is an adult female compared to male contact. Child care 94% female; libraries 87% female; accident and emergency departments 80% female; retail outlets 79% female; infants schools 92% female; welfare agencies 78% female; youth services 69% female, primary schools 89% female and secondary schools 74% female.

This evidence points to the structural, the institutional forces which shape men and women's and children's perception of who should be with children. This is not the man deciding whether to bath the kids in the isolation of his own home. These figures demonstrate the public values we hold, the gender arrangements we as a society are actively promoting. And this is what we hope, and are determined, to change.

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In order for people (men and women) to change, of course there has to be some incentive, some drive for a better situation, a better result. Here we also have commissioned new research because what is becoming very clear in the development of this project is that the understanding that we have of men in our community is very often a guess based on an assumption. We are just now coming to realise how little we really know about what men think. In relation to children, we asked men from round the nation, from all walks of life, to tell us what they think about their interaction with children. Not just their own children, but the children in their immediate area.

One of the most important findings of this research, and it is a finding I should say which applies to the vast majority of sub-groups sampled in this wide-ranging research project, is that machismo - the notion that men do the things they do out of some ideal of toughness - is a minor player (a very minor player) in this process. This will come as a shock, I realise, to many of the press, or at least their editors, here today. Machismo for too long has been the shorthand - and we now see incorrect - explanation of every social ill related to male behaviour. The major stumbling block for men getting involved with children is not a desire to be or look as tough as possible. On the contrary, what men say, in a variety of ways is that they feel awkward, incompetent or stupid in crucial areas of dealing with children. The factor identified in our research was a cluster of feelings and apprehensions best described as looking like an idiot or a fool. Embarrassment, if you like, proved to be the major single reason for men not wanting to do things around children.

This is an important finding. **Because you** can do things about embarrassment. You can set up situations where the idiot factor is reduced **Training**, explanation, gradation, familiarisation - there are strategies which we know make a difference, which avoid people looking like an idiot. If, on the other hand, all you think it's all about machismo, what have you got? About the best you can do is say, "Don't be tough".

Now let me describe for you the basic elements of the FATHER CARE PROJECT. Of those areas I listed before to you, retail to pre school, the site where most mileage can be made, where most impact can be made and where there is a clear mandate from the community, is in the school and pre-school sectors. So the focus of **the Project** is in pre-schools and in primary and secondary schools. We wish to have fathers productively interacting with children, but what does 'productively' mean? Productively , for this project, means to the mutual satisfaction of both parties; it means the adult man listening to the child, not abrogating his knowledge and experience as a grown man, but not simply instructing the children either. So we are not talking about males taking over teachers' jobs, although, of course , in the long run we would like to see a gender balance in the classroom, just as we strive for a gender balance in the principal's office. But as anyone who has spent any time at all in a school knows, there are many, many situations where adults who are not teachers can meaningfully interact with students. Volunteers have many important roles in schools, and fathers traditionally, have been conspicuous by their absence. But we will be encouraging fathers, in the broad sense of that term, to be highly visible, in numbers and enthusiasm, in the roles of helping with reading, of serving in the canteen, in being assistants to the sports teachers, in mentoring students with difficulties.

How will we encourage this? Caring, like most crucial aspects of fostering children, is not something which can be applied mechanically. We have come a long way since the early studies of institutionalised children demonstrated that simply feeding, clothing and watching over children is nowhere near proper caring. So that when we propose caring fathers, we do not simply intend for fathers to be on the premises, or even in the same room, but to actively engage with children. Further, we see engagement as more than discipline, more than coaching the football (although coaches can of course be caring); we mean engagement which includes warmth and respect. The engagement can be in playful or serious, it can be task related or just hanging around and it might include energetic physical play, sports, outdoors or indoors, large or small groups. This is where we can be prescriptive in saying that we want more than the traditional disciplinarian approach. But there is enormous scope for individual dads and schools to create enjoyable ways to do things together.

Do dads already know how to do this? Yes and no. We, men already have the potential and the capacity - what most of us lack is the experience. Based on the research conclusion of the importance of the idiot factor, we have built into the Project a strong development component, for schools, pre-schools and secondary schools to work out with the fathers and men in their communities, how best to engage dads.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Some schools have already made significant steps in this direction. Members of the Project Team have met and talked with dozens of groups across all regions who have already pioneered effective strategies with fathers. It gives me great pleasure, as part of the official launch of this Project, to show you the first 'Fathercare Works' booklet, which documents the various successful strategies used by these pre-schools and schools to build a climate of involvement with fathers. As you can see by the photo on the cover, this is not exclusively about middle-class tertiary-educated fathers. In fact, one surprising feature was how many schools in so-called disadvantaged areas have really targeted the men in their area, and many have succeeded. Their stories, not glib, promotional propaganda, but readily accessible accounts, warts and all, of what happened, are in here and a copy of this booklet will go to every school body in the next few weeks. But any resource book, no matter how good, can only be implemented with real people to make things happen. We need not just stimulus and novel ideas, but real expertise.

To this end, I am also pleased to present today, the inaugural Fathercare Leaders' Certificates for the 16 fathers from South West Sydney School District, who have completed the Father Care Leaders course from Granville TAFE. This certificate, which has been accorded national accreditation by the Vocational Education Training Accreditation Board, recognises the skills that these men have developed in recruiting strategies for fathers, in developing school-based activities for men, in planning and implementing father involvement and in liaising with men's organisations. This is a genuine educational qualification, with an intellectual and practical component. These 16 men worked with three schools in the area to actually plan and implement the involvement of men in the day to day activities of the schools, with notable success as well as some important lessons. At St Michaels, for example, at the conclusion of the course, not only were men for the first time helping with reading and with sports supervision, but a fathers' project linking men seeking carpentry skills with suitable trainers was formed. In another school, the literacy needs of the fathers themselves were recognised and addressed. An important point raised by the men in this course was that fathers have some important differences in their roles with boys and with girls. In many cases, the father's role is the same of course, but as school teachers well know, it is the boys in our schools who have the most difficulty with reading, with discipline, with the humanities subjects. With boys, fathers have a special role in providing leadership, companionship and mentoring for boys in the transition to becoming men. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men have particular cultural resources in this area which they are reclaiming and re-examining as part of their efforts to build strong indigenous communities. The Noongah Men in Western Australia for example, have taken the lead in developing a fathering role for men in that community which effectively integrates men as mentors and teachers to all Noongah boys attending schools in the south Wheatbelt areas of southern Western Australia. Their program of outdoor environmental education has dramatically improved retention and success rates among boys in the area. Not only are the men central players in the whole social life of boys at these schools, but, due to continual requests from the broader community, they have expanded their program to include over 80% of the schoolboys in this region.

Another important point about this model program is that the men worked not only within the schools. An essential aspect of community involvement is to engage not just individual men but men's organisations. In the case of South West Sydney, the UTS Olympic soccer club became the staunchest supporter of the project, even to the point of adopting the idea as part of their own members charter. The Marconi-Fairfield Stallions became another major sponsor and this model suggested to us a way of involving significant numbers of men from across the community.

A third aspect of this project which I am delighted to announce is the AFL Fathercare Cup. This cup, and the cash prize of $25,000, will be presented annually by TABCORP to the football team whose registered members can accrue the highest total of Fathercare hours (that is activities falling within the guidelines) in their local schools. Here let me just return briefly to the research base for this project. As community polls regularly find, men and women are most concerned with issues such as unemployment or crime. Children, and looking after children's needs, do not regularly appear in lists of most important issues. However, when our researchers interviewed men about their concerns, if the interview was allowed to run past a few minutes, concern for children was raised by fathers themselves in 76% of cases. This 76% is a considerable mandate for involving men in children's issues. If, and I repeat if, it is presented in the right way. The Fathercare Cup, our initial research suggests, might be one right way to translate this genuine concern into action. Contact with football clubs from every state where AFL is played has revealed considerable interest and, in league with sports administrators and of course school communities, we expect a big turnout for the final round next year.

But what of fathers who cannot, for legitimate reasons of work hours, visit their schools for activities? Time, the most important invention of the industrial revolution, is accepted by many as the most concrete barrier to men's participation in the activities of schools. Here we can take a leaf from the way military training is sponsored in our society. Since the 1940s, voluntary military service is given priority over work commitments for those involved. Employers are reimbursed for the time a man is off training to defend his country. Since probably the end of World War II, but certainly since the end of the cold war, it has become perfectly clear that our real struggle is with the social issues here at home. For this reason, it makes perfect sense to reimburse employers for the hours lost when men leave work to attend Fathercare activities in their school. By our estimates, the cost of this scheme in the first 12 months will amount to 1.2 million dollars. The expected increase in subsequent years will, the government believes, be money well spent, since it will reflect the movement of men into the caring role which is crucial to our future. These estimates, I should point out, are based on the experience at two industrial sites, Jencks engineering plant at Hexham, Newcastle, where 120 men out of a workforce of 400 were involved, and at the Woolworths distribution centres at Port Adelaide, Ipswich, Parramatta and Darwin. Out of a total male workforce of 11,000, just over 2,000 men took some part in school-based activities through the initiative. Two public sector organisations were also trialed, The taxation office in Dandenong and the Second Paratroop regiment based in Laverton. In both these organisations over 30% of eligible men were involved. Initial reports from all areas suggest that schools and children were delighted with the men's involvement. Some of the experiences from these schools form part of the 'Fathercare Works' publication I referred to earlier.

These four elements are of course, just a beginning. But they are, I believe a significant start to one of the most important issues ever tackled by an Australian government. In closing, I would just like to leave you with a comment made in one of the discussion groups conducted at the Jencks engineering plant. It came from a 32 year old forklift driver, the father of four, a man who hardly saw his own father during daylight hours and who eventually became deeply involved in every aspect of the project at the plant. In the discussion following the presentation of the project at the shop committee he said "You know that's right, we could be grabbing this opportunity to do things with our kids. After all, when was the last time you heard a man on his deathbed say he wished he'd spent more time at work?"

Madam Prime Minister, I invite you to officially launch THE FATHERCARE PROJECT.

Note: an earlier version of "Looking to Fathers" appeared in Browne R. and Fletcher R. Boys in Schools. Finch, 1995. An earlier version of "From the Minister for Family Matters" appeared as Fletcher R. "The FatherCare Project" in Lloyd T. What Next for Men? London, Working With Men, 1997.

FAMILY ACTION CENTRE

of The University of Newcastle

Vision: **A Truly Civil Society**
Mission: **Building Community**

Family Action Centre is an independently constituted Centre of the University of Newcastle. Since commencing in 1986 with one small funded project, the Centre has gradually expanded its focus to more holistically accomplish its mission of building community.

Family Action Centre builds community by supporting family well-being.

Family is the cornerstone of society. It requires support and nurturence. Family Action Centre supports family well-being through innovative programs that meet family needs and contribute to the health of the community.

The Caravan Project assists families who are permanent residents of caravan parks and mobile home villages through playgroups, social activities and one to one assistance to provide support, information and links with services in the community.

The Home-Start home visiting program and Homelink, providing academic and personal support for school students, both use trained volunteers to offer practical support to families who lack a support system. The International Student Care Program links trained volunteers with a student from another culture who is studying at the University of Newcastle.

The Men and Boys Project offers a resaerch and training consultancy to schools, health, and welfare organisations in the areas of Men's Health and Boys' Education.

Family Action Centre recognises that programs alone will not bring about positive social change. It therefore undertakes an advocacy role on behalf of marginalised groups, and disseminates important findings through a national network.

Family Action Centre also acknowledges the vital role of training in community building . The Centre's Training Enterprise offers training to institutional, corporate and community bodies to promote social cohesion and self responsibility.

All Centre activities are underpinned by an Action Research methodology that ensures input from all stakeholders into evaluation and ongoing program design.

THE MEN AND BOYS PROJECT

The project is based in the FAMILY ACTION CENTRE at the University of Newcastle, NSW. The Family Action Centre delivers support programs to marginalised and transient families using staff co-ordinators and trained volunteers. Action research, dissemination of information at all levels and advocacy are core features of the Centre's activities. Since the Men and Boys Project was set up in 1996 (initially as The Men's Health Project), men's and boy's well being has become a broad community concern reaching into areas of education, juvenile justice, cancer screening, fathering and suicide. At the start of 1997 The Men's Health Project was reorganized to reflect the broader focus of the Family Action Centre. The four programs which make up the Men and Boys Project are :

The FatherCare Initiative - encouraging positive father involvement in communities Men in Community - engaging men in community organizations Men's Health - research and teaching for better health Boyswork - working with schools and with boys to improve health and education.

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ACTIVITIES OF THE MEN AND BOYS PROJECT IN 1997

DISSEMINATING The experiences of schools trying to involve fathers in the education of students have been drawn together for a new publication Getting Dads Involved in Schools.

DOCUMENTING The recruitment and support of male volunteers in the ongoing work of the Family Action Centre programs in caravan parks and among disadvantaged groups is continuing. A national publication is planned.

RESEARCH The NRMA commissioned an investigation Fathers Talking to Their Sons About Risky Driving. The research was published in NRMA Today and presented to NSW and Commonwealth Parliamentary Committees. A leaflet for fathers by the NRMA, Like Father Like Son was launched on Fathers Day. Follow-up research has been proposed.

CONSULTANCIES Logan Area Division of General Practice sought help for its' project Adolescent Males' Access to Health Services and Fremantle Division of General Practice sought advice on a Men's Health video. A background paper on Men's Health Services has been completed for the NSW Health Department Men's Health Advisory Group.

TRAINING for indigenous and non-indigenous health workers was held over five days in Cairns in May.

SEMINARS For teachers and health workers in WA, NSW, QLD, TAS and VIC. seminars have been held under two headings: Improving Men's Health and, Improving Boys' Education.

BOYS IN SCHOOLS - NEW RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

BEING A MAN PHOTOPAK

At last, a really useful resource to get boys talking. This set of 45, A4 size black and white photographs of men and boys have been selected to provoke boys' thoughts and words. A teachers and leaders' manual includes exercises, questions to accompany each photo and a one-lesson outline for inviting boys to take responsibility for the tone of the school.

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Edited by Richard Fletcher and Rollo Browne. A quarterly, professional bulletin with a practical focus on improving boys' schooling.

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